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The information in this brief comes from research carried out by ZAMISE, UNZA faculty and graduate students in partnership with the Ministry of General Education (MOGE)) and Strengthening Educational Performance Up (STEP-Up) Zambia, a USAID-funded project designed to improve education management and raise academic achievement at the primary level. It is based on questionnaires administered in early 2015 with 135 District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) officers from 30 districts (3 per province), 44 Provincial Education Office (PEO) staff from all 10 provinces, and 11 officers from national level.

Strengthening Continuous Professional Development to Improve Early Grade Reading

The Ministry of General Education (MOGE) seeks to improve lesson delivery through Continuous Professional Development (CPD). CPD aims to keep officers updated with knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a dynamic education system. The findings of this study indicate that CPD activities were generally planned, monitored, and reviewed, but more work needs to be done to expand CPD, share guidelines and strategies, and address critical needs.

Finding 1: CPD Activities are Budgeted, though Insufficiently Supported

DEBS and PEO officers indicated that CPD activities are included in planning documents and budgets, but the challenges arise in the actual implementation and are compounded by factors such as - limited funding, inadequate transport, and distance to various stations.

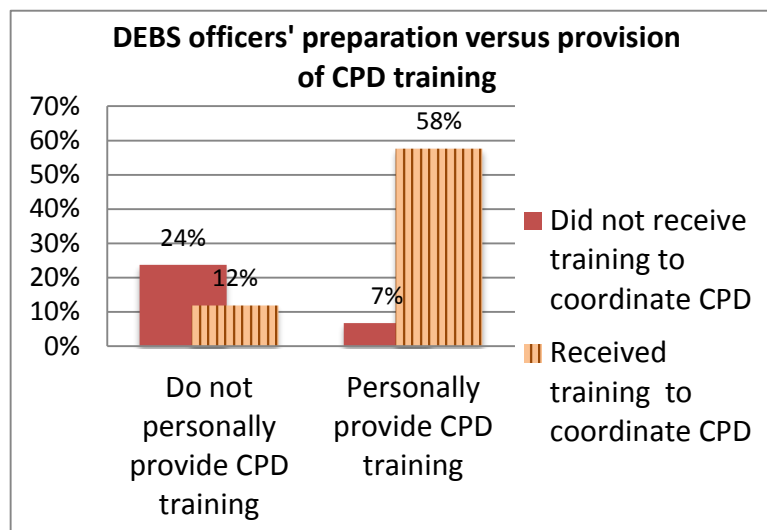
- Most officers at DEBS (71%) and PEO (65%) levels indicated that there was a budget line item for CPD in their district or province in 2015.
- 75% of PEO and DEBS officers indicated CPD activities occur at their level. Approximately half (45%) of PEO and DEBS officers indicating CPD on a quarterly basis, 18% monthly, and 12% weekly.
- The frequency of monitoring CPD activities was generally well aligned with CPD implementation. However, 27% of DEBS respondents thought there was no CPD monitoring.
- 70% of the DEBS respondents indicated that they reviewed their CPD activities at least once per quarter. Reviews ensure that CPD activities are adequately covering topics.
- DEBS and PEO officers described challenges of insufficient funding, transport, long distance for both CPD activities and monitoring. In response to how to address challenges, several officers further explained that sharing of experience and monitoring instruments is needed to improve CPD., Seven DEBS officers out of the 107 who offered possible explanations on the impediments to effective delivery of CPD said that some teachers exhibited negative attitudes toward CPD such as not wanting to participate in CPD. The results of the study suggest that DEBS and PEO officers generally plan for CPD activities, but experience myriad challenges—such as insufficient funding, distance from one station to another, and lack of transport. These seem to undermine the ability to effectively implement CPD activities.



Finding 2: CPD Activities and Preparation and Guidance

Training is necessary before one undertakes a particular program or activity in order to obtain the required skills and competencies. It is important that MOGE officers who conduct and coordinate CPD activities, receive training.

- 69% of those surveyed, (n=122) DEBS officers have received training on how to coordinate CPD meetings and 58% of DEBS officers have also conducted trainings. However, 7% of DEBS officers who conduct CPD trainings had not received training themselves. Overall those who are serving as CPD trainers appear to have trained themselves, though the available data does not indicate if the training of



trainers is adequate or of appropriate quality and standard. Notably, finding 3 below suggests that MOGE officers believe that CPD has limited effectiveness to improve early grade reading.

- CPD is conducted widely at both DEBS and PEO levels. Only 6% at DEBS level indicated that none of their officers were involved in CPD activities (94% have someone in the DEBS office involved in CPD), and 12% at PEO level indicated no officers are involved in CPD in their office (88% have someone in the PEO office involved in CPD).
- In addition, 76% of DEBS officers (and 74% of PEO officers) indicated that they have guidelines for conducting CPD meetings, while 24% said they did not have (and 26% of PEO respondents).

The high percentage of people trained or involved is indicative of CPD activities being fairly well spread throughout Zambia since this data came from 30 districts and in all the 10 provincial offices. However the preparation and guidance for CPD is not evenly spread and consistent across districts and provinces.

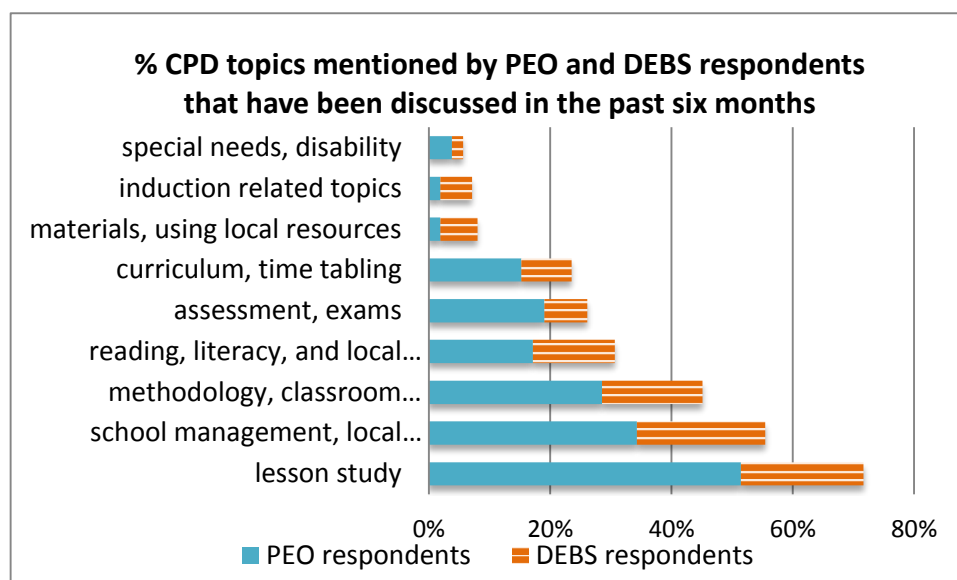
Finding 3: Limited Effectiveness of CPD for Early Grade Reading

This study indicates that CPD is generally considered effective, but the topics on presentation and monitoring do not seem to adequately address literacy, reading, and pupil learning generally.

- Only 47% of PEO officers said CPD was very effective or effective in improving early grade reading, with 42% indicating only somehow effective and 11% not effective. DEBS officers were more optimistic for CPD to address early grade reading with 65% indicating very effective or effective, whereas 28% said it was somehow effective and 7% said it was not effective at all.
- Lesson study, school management, as well as methodology and classroom management were the most common CPD topics discussed by PEO and DEBS officers in the past six months. Literacy and language related topics were a small proportion of all topics (13% among DEBS and 17% among PEO), which is concerning given the recent release of the National Literacy Framework.

The graph below shows that literacy, assessments, curriculum, materials, induction and special needs topics are not discussed as much as other CPD topics.

In practice, there is a mismatch between the belief or assertion that CPD is an effective conduit for improving literacy and commitment to implement topics that improve on pupil learning. To improve reading at early grade reading levels, CPD activities need to focus more on literacy related topics, preferably at a grassroots level (school or zone) involving teachers. The topics for CPD meetings must be need driven.



| Policy Action Points |
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| <p><u>CPD focus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give more attention to literacy in CPD activities. The topics of CPD must be need driven. |
| <p><u>CPD Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The frequency of CPD tends to be quarterly, often at provincial level. There is need to intensify on the training to coordinate and provide CPD meetings, with associated funding. • CPD monitoring appears to be at a similar frequency that CPD activities are being performed. Monitoring can be decentralized to reduce on cost, bureaucracy and logistics, particularly since transportation was seen as a primary barrier for monitoring. Sharing monitoring instruments at all levels would help to facilitate this decentralization effort. • More attention to literacy and reading topics is needed, particularly in connection to the National Literacy Framework. |
| <p><u>CPD Guidance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD implementation guidelines should be distributed widely to all DEBS and PEO offices. • Guidelines and support for CPD must be dynamic encapsulating all aspects and new trends in teaching methodologies. The CPD review process appears to need further attention so that CPD reviews occur on an annual basis with assessment strategies to indicate how well new strategies are working. • Officers providing CPD who have not been trained in CPD coordination should either be trained or reviewed if they have alternative training that qualifies them to adequately support CPD. Also, trained officers could be posted in areas that lack trained CPD coordinators. |